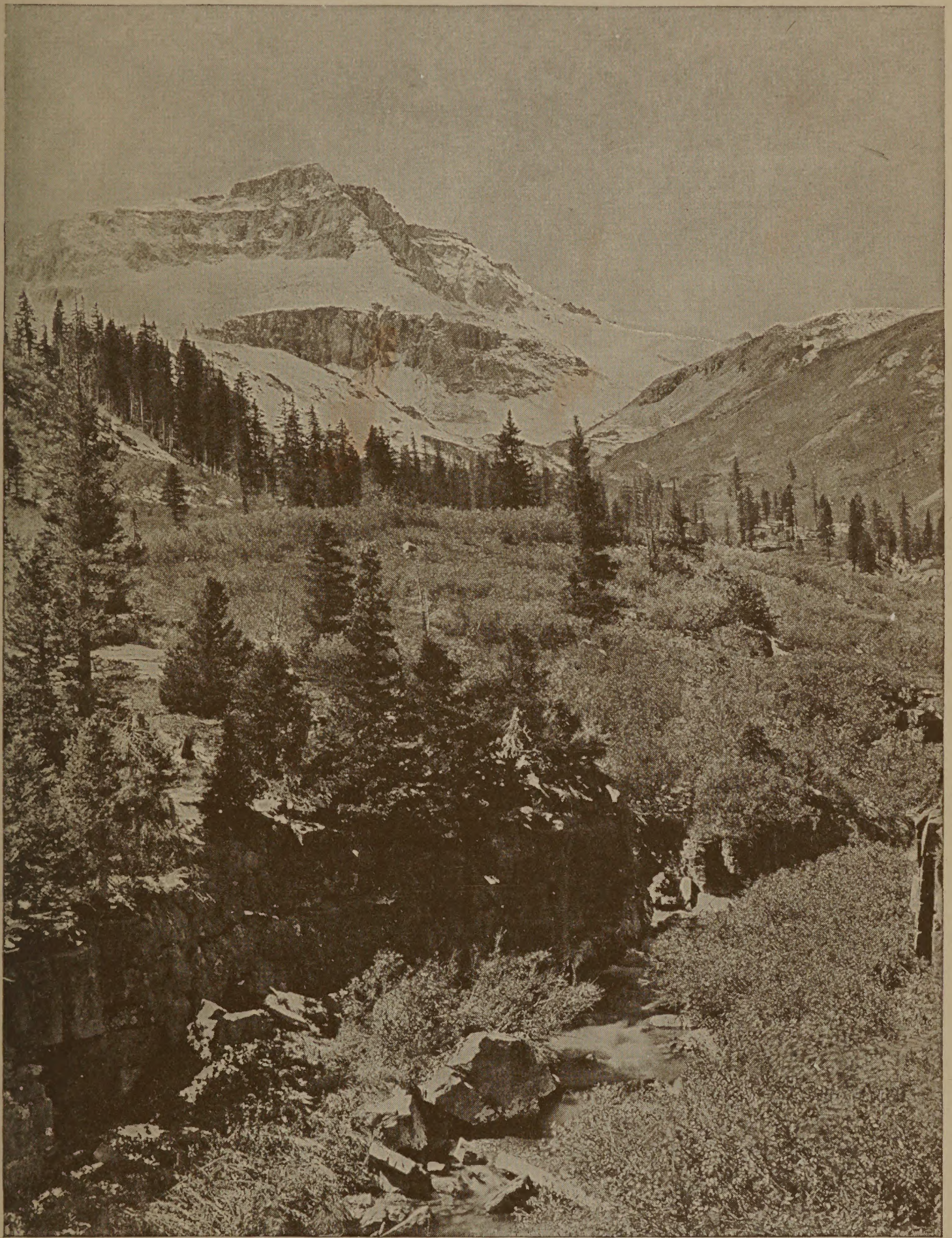


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THE OURAY MOUNTAINS OF THE UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST



YANKEE BOY BASIN AND GILPIN PEAK

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THE OURAY MOUNTAINS OF THE UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST

A PLAYGROUND IN THE PEAKS.

NO PORTION of Colorado better deserves the title of "The Switzerland of America" than the mountain areas in the Uncompahgre National Forest. Here is a region of high and rugged peaks, deep, rock-walled canyons, great plateaus, and green valleys. Excellent fishing, delightful camping sites, and an endless variety of mountain scenery await the visitor. No bothersome restrictions are imposed upon those who use the Uncompahgre National Forest for recreation. The camper may pitch his tent in any spot on Government land that strikes his fancy, and the sportsman may fish and hunt, subject only to the Colorado game laws. Practically all that is required of the visitor is to be careful with fire and to keep his camp site clean. The headquarters of the Uncompahgre Forest is at Delta, where detailed information concerning recreational features and routes of travel can be obtained. Similar information will be given gladly at the Forest Service district office, Federal building, Denver, and by local Forest officers on the ground.

The Uncompahgre National Forest has an area of 790,589 acres, and is composed of three divisions, the Uncompahgre, the Ouray, and the Fruita. The largest of these is the Uncompahgre division, which contains over a half million acres and extends along the Uncompahgre Plateau for a distance of 70 miles. The Ouray division, which is slightly less than half the size of the Uncompahgre division, covers a part of Ouray, Gunnison, Hinsdale, and Montrose Counties.

The Uncompahgre Plateau, a level table-land between the San Miguel and Uncompahgre Rivers, timbered with yellow pine, Douglas fir, Engelmann spruce, and aspen, stands 4,000 feet above the floor of

the Uncompahgre Valley. The edges of the plateau break away abruptly into deep canyons through a sandstone formation of brilliant coloring. The northern portion of the plateau is cut by the Unaweep Canyon, which at one time contained the stream that drained the valleys and watersheds to the east.

In sharp contrast to the Uncompahgre Plateau is the Ouray division of the Forest, which this booklet describes in detail. Around Ouray the mountains are steep and rough, with deep canyons separating sharp ridges and jagged peaks. A wonderful variety of coloring in the formation adds much to their scenic beauty. Approximately 95 per cent of the division is above 10,000 feet in elevation, and many points reach an altitude of more than 14,000 feet. The southern and western parts are drained by the Uncompahgre River, and the north and east sides by tributaries of the Gunnison River.

THE OURAY MOUNTAIN REGION.

The natural point of entry to the Ouray mountain region is through the town of Ouray, one of the beauty spots of Colorado, reached from Montrose on the "Rainbow Route" by auto via the San Juan Highway or by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. Its site is a natural park surrounded by an amphitheater of precipitous cliffs several thousand feet high, the rocks of which are banded with all the colors of the rainbow, intermixed with the dark green of pines and firs. On one side of the town a silver cascade gushes forth from the striated cliffs, while at the opposite limits are the Twin Peaks and Washington Monument, reached by easy grades over a well-built trail. This is a favorite climb for visitors because of the beautiful view afforded from the tops of the peaks.

Ouray is the outfitting point for many interesting trips into the mountains of the Uncompahgre National Forest. Here saddle and pack animals and guides can be secured. A Government forest ranger is also stationed in the town. By auto one may go to Silverton over the stage road leading up Uncompahgre Canyon and through



ON THE BEAR CREEK TRAIL

Ironton Park to the divide at Red Mountain, altitude 11,025 feet, thence continuing south through the Durango National Forest via Mineral Creek to Silverton. The most enjoyable features of this trip are the brilliant and vari-colored formations of the Red Mountains, the mining camps of the Ironton district, and the splendid vista of the Mineral Creek Valley and Sultan Mountain (13,336 feet) obtained from the divide. Lake City, on a branch of the Denver & Rio Grande, 36 miles from Sapinero, is also a good outfitting point for trips to the Uncompahgre Peak country.

In and around Ouray are many hot springs of medicinal value, the waters of which are piped into a large pool for swimming and to a sanitarium for the treatment of patients. There are also many cold mineral springs. The town's water supply comes from a National Forest stream.

There is much wild game in the region, and during the winter months when the snow is deep mountain sheep may be seen daily in the streets of Ouray, where they are fed hay by the citizens.

CAMPING, FISHING, AND HUNTING.

One may enter the Ouray mountains with a pack outfit almost anywhere, and be sure of finding attractive spots at which to camp for a day or more, with good water, forage for stock, and plenty of fuel-wood close at hand. The climate of this part of Colorado is particularly agreeable for outdoor life. Clear, warm, sunshiny days and cool nights that make sleeping under warm blankets a luxury as well as a necessity, are the general rule throughout August, September, and October. In July and early August showers are frequent.

The streams of this region are well stocked with native, eastern brook, and rainbow trout, and even the inexperienced angler should have little difficulty in making good catches. Among the most noted fishing waters are East Dallas, East, Middle, and West Cimarron, Cow, Big Blue, Fall and Little Cimarron Creeks, all within a two days' trip

from Ouray. Thousands of fry are "planted" in these streams each year by the Forest Service in cooperation with the State and private individuals.

The laws of Colorado prohibit the killing of practically all game animals commonly found in the mountains. Predatory animals, such as coyotes, bobcats, bears, mountain lions, and lynx may be killed



LUNCH TIME ON A PACK TRIP IN THE UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST

at all seasons. Those wishing to hunt should inform themselves regarding open seasons, license requirements, and similar matters. Forest and local State officers can give this information.

Visitors interested in observing wild game and in "shooting" them with a camera will find pleasure in the large number of deer encountered everywhere in the Forest and in the bands of mountain sheep which frequent the timberline ridges and peaks. Elk, which formerly roamed this country in large numbers, have almost disappeared, though a few head are seen occasionally in remote districts.

CANYONS AND WATERFALLS.

One of the chief attractions of the Ouray division is Box Canyon, practically within the town limits of Ouray, and said to be unique of its kind. It is half a mile long, only from 30 to 60 feet wide, and about 300 feet deep. At the lower end of the gorge the waters of Canyon Creek fall 150 feet with a roar that echoes and re-echoes against the massive rock walls.

Uncompahgre Canyon, at the outskirts of Ouray, is 3 miles long and varies in depth from 150 to 500 feet. The Bear Creek Falls, which enter this canyon at the junction of Bear Creek and the Uncompahgre River, are 253 feet in height. They are spanned by a bridge on the Ouray-Silverton auto road.

Dexter Creek Canyon or Red Canyon, considered by many to be even more beautiful than Box Canyon, is situated 2 miles north of Ouray. It is half a mile long, from 20 to 60 feet wide, and from 100 to 200 feet deep.

Of the many beautiful waterfalls in this locality may be mentioned Oak Creek Falls, 1 mile west of Ouray, height 150 feet; Bridal Veil Falls on the Horsethief Trail, 1 mile north of Ouray, where a series of cascades extend along Bridal Veil Creek for over a mile, and Ruby Falls, 200 feet in height, 10 miles from Ouray on the Sneffels Road.

TRAIL TRIPS.

The Horsethief Trail is one of the oldest and most noted routes of travel in southern Colorado. It is said to have been built by horse thieves, who, in the early days, stole horses from the San Luis Valley and drove them overland to the Blue Mountains of Utah. The trail ascends the steep sides of the amphitheater, 1 mile north of Ouray, by easy grades, passing through dense stands of fir and aspen to the velvety grass slopes of a projecting ridge where a lookout point is located. From this prominence one is afforded a stirring view for many miles of the near-by mountains and the

Horsethief Trail.

country stretching down the Uncompahgre Valley. On clear days the La Sal Mountains of Utah, 185 miles away, are plainly visible. Some 2,700 feet below are the checkerboard blocks and white streets of the town of Ouray.

Continuing on the trail, one passes through the forest zones to the timberline regions of American Flats. Along the route are grassy meadows carpeted with brilliant wild flowers—the red and white Indian paint-brush, the deep blue mertensia, the purple pentstemon, the deep yellow buffalo pea, and many others of equal beauty. From these meadows the trail crosses Engineer Mountain on the divide between the Uncompahgre and the Lake Fork of the Gunnison Rivers. Here, literally, “hills on hills and Alps on Alps arise.” To the east, Uncompahgre Peak, 14,306 feet high, raises its massive head from the level expanse of American Flats. Near it tower such other heights as the Matterhorn, Wetterhorn, Courthouse, and Wild Horse Peaks. From Engineer Mountain the return trip to Ouray may be made either by way of the Bear Creek Trail or via Mineral Point and Uncompahgre Canyon, the entire circle trip being easily completed on horseback in one day.

The Bear Creek Trail, which starts from a point on the Ouray–Silverton auto road 2 miles south of Ouray, is exceedingly spectacular,



MOUNTAIN SHEEP IN THE TOWN OF OURAY

especially to visitors unaccustomed to traveling in the mountains. The route zigzags up a steep slope, around a projecting shoulder of the mountain, and then along a series of narrow ledges cut into the sheer face of a rocky precipice. Above, the cliffs tower to a dizzy height, while hundreds of feet below are the foaming waters of Bear Creek. The view of the surrounding mountains and far-reaching valleys is one to inspire the traveler. The pleasure of this trip, which requires one-half day from Ouray, is greatly enhanced by the perfect safety with which the journey may be made on foot or on horseback.

Bear Creek Trail. The Dallas Trail leads out of Ouray in a westerly direction, climbing the divide between Coal Creek and the Uncompahgre River. Along the first few miles of the route are dense stands of pine and spruce, intermixed with groves of giant aspen, the ashy-gray boles of which show the scars made by the claws of bears. Farther on, one comes to a region that was swept by a forest fire some 12 years ago, where numberless trees stand dead and charred. This scene of desolation is made bright by the purple-colored willow herb.

Dallas Trail. Leaving the Dallas Trail at East Dallas Creek, one enters the Blue Lakes Trail, which leads for several miles through heavy coniferous forests. This trail follows the East Dallas, along the course of which are numerous beaver dams and the gnawed stumps of aspen which have been felled by these industrious animals. At timberline the trail leads past the Blue Lakes, set like sapphires in the hollow of the hills, in whose clear waters are reflected passing clouds and the rugged summits of near-by mountains. From the lakes the trail winds up a steep slope to Blue Lakes Pass, from which the summit of Mount Sneffels, 14,158 feet, is reached on foot by a half-hour climb.

The mountain vista looking east from Blue Lakes Pass is one of the finest in Colorado. At one's feet lies Yankee Boy Basin, flanked on the right and left by Gilpin and Potosi Peaks, 13,682 and 13,763



OURAY, THE GATEWAY TO THE UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST

feet in elevation, respectively, while in the distance loom the rugged outlines of the numberless snowcapped beacons of the San Juan Mountains.

From the pass, the return trip to Ouray is made by trail and wagon road through Yankee Boy Basin and down Sneffels Creek. En route one passes the celebrated Camp Bird mine, from which is obtained a wonderful view of the Imogene Basin and United States Peak. This region is the home of the avalanche, and the tracks of the Water-hole and United States snowslides may be traced plainly down the face of the mountains.

At a point near the divide on the Ouray-Silverton auto road, a half mile above the town of Red Mountain, the High Line Trail leads in a northwesterly direction to Ptarmigan Lake, where *High Line Trail.* hundreds of ptarmigan are to be found. These birds of the grouse family are feathered mottled-gray in summer and snow-white in winter, their plumage thus blending with the color of the rocks and snow amidst which they live, a characteristic which gives them protection from their enemies.

On Grand Peak, 13,200 feet, the trails from Ouray, Telluride, and Silverton converge. From this summit the town of Telluride may be seen thousands of feet below, in the canyon. Nearby are the Red Mountains, whose bare slopes, colored by iron deposits, contrast sharply with the deep green forests surrounding the peaks. Returning by the Ouray branch trail, one travels through the Imogene Basin, carpeted with columbine, and past the Camp Bird mine to the wagon road leading into town. The time required for this round trip on horseback is from 8 to 10 hours.

SUMMER-HOME SITES.

Those who wish a summer home in the Uncompahgre Forest may, under act of Congress, lease a site for a term of years. For ordinary summer-home use sites usually are restricted to 1 acre or less.

The charge varies from \$10 to \$25 per year, according to the desirability of the site and the local demand for summer homes. Full information can be obtained at the headquarters in Delta or at the district office of the Forest Service in Denver.

Many attractive summer-home sites can be found in the Ouray division. Some of these may be reached from Ridgeway by wagon



MAKING CAMP ON A PACK TRIP IN THE UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST. A FOREST SERVICE FIRE TOOL BOX CAN BE SEEN UNDER ONE OF THE TREES ON THE RIGHT

road, distance from 7 to 12 miles, or by trail from Ouray, distance from 2 to 15 miles. The general elevation of these tracts is 8,000 feet, and climatic conditions are ideal.

In the Big Cimarron Creek Valley, from the junction of the East, Middle, and West Forks north to the Forest boundary, there are many attractive cabin and camp sites. This section is reached by a fair wagon road either from Montrose or Cimarron Station on the Denver

& Rio Grande Railroad, distant 38 and 25 miles, respectively. The altitude of this valley varies from 8,000 to 9,000 feet. At the junction of the forks of the Big Cimarron, near the Jackson Ranger Station, there are sites for 50 summer homes. Another attractive colony site is on Big Blue Creek near the Alpine Ranger Station, reached by trail from Youman, 9 miles distant on the Lake Fork division of the Denver & Rio Grande. Land is available for 50 cottages, and the Forest Service is building a road into this country. The elevation of the Big Blue Valley at this point is approximately 10,000 feet.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING.

To those who delight in the strenuous pleasure of mountain climbing, the views afforded from the summits of the peaks of the Ouray division more than repay the effort. Uncompahgre Peak, 14,306 feet, is easily accessible by trail from Ouray, and upon a clear day affords a view of four different States—Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona.

Although Uncompahgre Peak is the best known mountain in this part of Colorado, there are many others that will appeal to the climber as a challenge to his prowess. Within a radius of 8 miles are Wetterhorn (14,020 feet), Matterhorn (13,589 feet), Coxcomb (13,663 feet), Wildhorse (13,271 feet), and Chimney (11,785 feet) Peaks, and Sheep (13,180 feet), and Courthouse (12,165 feet) Mountains.

Other noted mountains of the Ouray division are Sneffels (14,158 feet), Handies (14,008 feet), Potosi (13,763 feet), Gilpin (13,682 feet), and Whitehouse (13,496 feet) Peaks.



MAP OF THE UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST

Solid black lines represent Forest boundary. Distances between solid light lines (township boundaries) represent 6 miles

